

WEE DOÑA DOLORES.

BY HOWARD FREELY, AUTHOR OF 'A NYMPH OF THE WEST,'
'A LONE STAR BO-PREP,' ETC.



It was shearing-time at the rancho of San Antonio the Blessed. The little roan doña was perfectly aware of that. At least, so she told Chiquito; and Chiquito, like a sensible cub, received the information stolidly, sitting on his haunches and clasping his cushioned paws together

in an ecstasy of warmth and comfort. They were seated in the shade of the southern wall of the rancho. The hot sun beat down upon the adobe structure, baking and bleaching the bricks anew, warping the shingles of the low roof, starting resinous tears from the pine boards, and compelling the small red lizards to take shelter under the protecting eaves, where they crouched and palpitated in the dust, with a wicked leer in their bright eyes that would have frightened Dolores had she not been used to them. One was looking at her now. He was a little fellow—a study in terra-cotta polka-dots. Dolores admired him for a while, and then, growing weary, threw a stick in his direction, upon which he skittered away.

"Oh, dear! Chiquito," said the doña, very much bored by her idleness, "I wish you and I had something to do."

Chiquito rolled over in the dust, both his paws clasped over his nose, and winked and blinked at the doña in perfect contentment. Barring one or two flies that disturbed his bearing, he was quite satisfied to be idle.

The doña raised her black eyes and glanced toward the brush pens. Certainly there the situation was reversed. Fourteen men, at least, were busy in the pens; to say nothing of Antonio—her playmate and companion—who, more ragged and picturesque than usual that morning, was standing outside, busily counting the shorn sheep as they issued from the "shoot," and putting a pecan in the pocket of his torn breeches every time he counted a score. His antelope fawn, "Pepita," was running here and there among the sheep, keeping at a safe

distance from "Concho," the shepherd-dog, who was doing duty as "whipper in" and preventing the flock from straggling.

The great brush pen had been cut up and subdivided into half a dozen small corrals. Men were at work in one of them, taking the cockle burs from the sheep. In another, a gang of Mexicans were shearing, the yellow fleeces falling from the bodies of the patient ewes like a woven fabric, stained here and there with bright crimson where the clicking shears drew blood. Crooks and paint-brands were lying about. Dolores could see her father, the don, seated at a deal table, keeping tally with pen and paper, and giving to each man a counter in return for the bundled fleece he handed in. Behind him a tall man, mounted on a frame with four uprights, was storing away the woolly bundles in the wool-sacks, and treading them firmly into place. Every sheep that issued from the "shoot" came forth shorn of her beauty, lean, decrepit, and miserable, bearing on her left hip in red paint the resplendent symbol—"P. S. A."—which, being interpreted, meant Pedro of the San Antonio rancho.

The rancho of the Blessed San Antonio lay in a narrow valley, shut in on one side by shelving cliffs and rocks that bordered a river, and stretching away upon the other in sloping hills and "divides." The father of Dolores, Don Pedro, was a rich cattle-owner, and counted his flocks and herds by the thousand head. Between his sheep-shearing and his cattle "round-ups," the wealthy Spaniard had his hands full.

The cook came wearily out of the kitchen and leaned against the railing of the little fence. He was in an easy deshable of undershirt and ducking breeches. He had discarded his boots and stockings as well, but he wore a paper cap on his head. The cook wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and sighed, from which it could be inferred that it was very hot in the kitchen or that the baking had turned out badly. The cook was never known to sigh except on these accounts.

The doña raised her eyes, and Chiquito sat up expectantly. He knew that it was about the treacle hour. Meeting with no recognition from

the cook, Chiquito walked gravely over to where he was standing, with a rolling gait, very similar to a drunken Jack tar, and rubbed his foolish brown head against his grease-spotted trousers. That gentleman petulantly raised his bare foot and rolled him over backward, where he lay a protesting roll of fat and fur. The doña was indignant.

"If you cannot recognize my Chiquito, you needn't kick him. Señor Vagamundo," she remonstrated. The cook was called "Mr. Vagabond" on account of his careless toilet.

"Hello! Señorita—it's you, eh?" replied he, pushing his paper hat back on his head. "Yer so still, this morning, I didn't know you. Reckoned yer was a prairie-dog or a jack-rabbit, sittin' thar a-sunnin' yese'f, and a-mopin', with yer big black eyes wide open. Why don't ye git yese'f inter gear and go to herdin'?"

"Mind thy bakin, Señor Vagamundo!" returned the brown doña, sitting up erect and furious. "And wherefore dost thou dare to order me? Is it that thou thinkest me a child? After a little, I will go, and when it pleases me. My father, the don, has told me."

Thus admonished, the cook went back to his loaves and bread-pans, after first fishing out a square lump of sugar from the pocket of his trousers, which he bestowed on the recumbent bear. Chiquito accepted the morsel eagerly and ate it very leisurely, without taking the trouble to get up, concluding the performance by putting one paw in his mouth and sucking it with an air of taking a light lunch from the member.

A shrill whistle caused Dolores to look up. She gazed out across the plain, shading her eyes against the glare of the sun with her little brown hand. Far out among the scattered mesquites that straggled across the valley, she beheld the gallant Antonio, mounted upon his intrepid cow-pony and waving his hand to her. A small flock of sheared ewes, with their lambs, were grazing away in front of him, under the supervision of Concho and the mustang—"Pepillo" was also a capital shepherd.

Dolores caught up her hat—a gaudy sombrero, heavy with silver lace—and set it firmly over her raven curls. Then, snatching up a light crook that lay at her side, she ran out upon the prairie as fast as her little brown limbs could carry her. She took no leave of Chiquito. But the quick instincts of the bear soon noted her departure; and, sitting up lazily, he sniffed the air once or twice and rolled out of the enclosure, in awkward pursuit of her active little figure.

The Señor Antonio was waiting in the saddle.

From his brown eyes to his straight black hair and sallow complexion, his lineage spoke in his face. It was unmistakably Spanish. He might have been only sixteen; but, child of the sun as he was, he looked older.

"And why so late, little one?" he said, kindly, as the doña arrived, flushed and panting. "Is it that thou art too lazy to herd, to-day? Have a care, señorita! See what I have brought thee for a present."

He leaned down in his stirrups and extended toward her, as he spoke, a long grayish object that rattled in his fingers.

"Madre de Dios!" exclaimed the doña, piously, taking it eagerly in her little brown hand. "A rattler—and an old one! Ten rattles and a button!" she continued, counting the sections of horny shell. "Is it not a treasure?" she cried, addressing Chiquito, who had blundered up, and shaking the grim castanet before his sniffing nose and half-foolish eyes. Chiquito raised himself upon his haunches, into an attitude known at the rancho as "company front," and waved a deprecatory paw in protest at the inquiry. Afterward, he appeared to reflect.

"Idiota!"* exclaimed the doña, turning away impatiently. "Gracias,† my Níco.‡ Where is it that thou hast killed this terrible rattler? It is delightful! I will have it set as a silver pin for my manta."§

She held up the rattler as she spoke.

"Of a verity, it will be pretty," returned the señor, gravely. "Thou shalt wear it as a charm against the Evil One. Wilt thou ride Pepillo? I fear lest thou step upon the husband of her ladyship. Who knows?"

The doña glanced down at her diminutive feet, shod with high-heeled slippers. She had forgotten her riding-boots and little silver spurs. The doña was naturally courageous, but she had the aversion of her sex to snakes. Pepillo also was capricious and hard-gaited, and he was caparisoned in a man's Mexican saddle. But the doña decided to waive these drawbacks—she would ride Pepillo. In a twinkling, the Señor Antonio had dismounted and lifted her into the saddle.

Pepillo became suddenly aware of the presence of Chiquito. They were not friends. The mustang seemed to have an idea that all that Chiquito wanted was to get him at a disadvantage, and then pitch into him; so he would protest against his society with arched spine and ears laid back

* Idiot! † Thanks. ‡ Pet name for "Antonio." § A high wrap.

and a few expressive kicks of displeasure. This was discouraging to a rider. No sooner was the Doña Dolores mounted, than he executed a war-dance of disgust at the sight of Chiquito.

"Dio mio! I shall be killed, Antonio!" screamed the doña, clinging fast to the pommel.

Señor Antonio kicked the bear smartly, rolling him over in a dusty heap, and sprang to the head of the mustang. He soon quieted him.

After that, they fared on together behind the querulous sheep, the doña quite imperious and magnificent, seated upon the Mexican saddle of embossed leather. Antonio had the true Spanish extravagance of taste regarding his riding-equipment.

It was a fine morning. The "scissor-tails" were piloting a slow flight of ashen plumes and rosy wings in the soft still air. The mock-birds were half crazy, as usual, and fairly overflowed and gurgled like feathered fountains of song. A thousand scents from the wild flowers of the narrow valley rose upon and enveloped them; the "buffalo clover" was everywhere, carpeting their way with its purple clusters and steeping the sense with delicious odor. Níco plucked a spray or two, and handed them to the little brown doña. She twined them among her raven tresses. Chiquito, rolling along at a respectful distance from the señor's admonishing foot, brought up an inglorious rear. The protesting sheep and frisking lambs, grazing on ahead, overtopped by the graceful head of the lightly-tripping antelope, completed this pleasant Lone-Star pastoral.

Suddenly, Doña Dolores spoke, looking down from her equine throne with diminutive dignity.

"Níco," she said, "I think I weary of Chiquito. He is very droll; but he is rough and grows bearish, and he is too fond of molasses to make an agreeable pet. I shall trade him. I think. Wilt thou give me Pepita for him? She is more to my taste."

Now, the señor had presented the doña with Chiquito only a month or two before. It was after a bee-hunt. Himself and several vaqueros of the rancho had discovered Mother Bruin busily engaged in robbing a hollow tree of its store of honey and sweets, and, having killed her with their carbines, smoked out the bees, cut down the tree, and possessed themselves of her plunder. But they found Chiquito fast asleep among the rootlets, where he had probably been bestowed by his mother and had gone to sleep until she called for him.

So they carried the droll little thing home and gave it to the doña. And the doña was delighted, of course, and lavished a wealth of Spanish tenderness and epithets over the soft

brown bear baby, with its feeble nose and mischievous eyes, soft cushioned paws, and general sleepy suggestions. And she spent a deal of care and trouble in bringing him up, nursing him anxiously—with his foster-mother, the bottle—and generally alleviating the appetite of the orphan with honey and brown sugar. So that Chiquito thrived and was satisfied with his surroundings. As yet, his taste for uncooked flesh was undeveloped. Occasionally, when the doña, who was a good Catholic, was keeping some fast-day and had neglected Chiquito's meals in her piety, he had been known to look longingly on a lamb, and on one occasion playfully knocked one over that came too near; but it was only with an air of experimenting on the power of his paw to buffet—a sort of bear's study of base-ball, rather than any indication of carnivorous propensities; and it was so regarded. So long as the cravings of hunger were supplied, he was very peaceable, and, at times, even affectionate, being especially generous in bestowing a sticky hug upon his admirers.

Señor Antonio reflected but a moment before he replied. He felt the necessity of advising Dolores against the exchange.

"Have a care of what thou sayest, señorita mia,"* he said. "Thou knowest that Chiquito will, one day, be worth more than Pepita. Didst thou not hear what Señor Baptista—he with the dancing bears—declared? That Chiquito was most intelligent, and would make a fine performer."

"What is that to me?" returned the brown doña, turning half round in the saddle and frowning down upon him. "It cannot be, my Antonio, that you think I care for the money? Is not my father—Don Pedro—rich enough, if I desire that?"

"Ay de mi!"† rejoined Antonio, with an extravagant sigh of regret. "It is a grief to me to part with Pepita. She has grace; she has beauty; she has eyes large and brown, and the soul shines through them. She reminds me of you, my Dolores. I do not wish to part with Pepita."

"And why not?" pleaded Dolores. "Is it not to me—thy little sister? Think you by that you will lose her? Shall you not see Pepita, and care for her too? And what is the difference?"

"Bueno!"‡ said the Señor Antonio, apparently convinced. "So be it. But, if thou thinkest to make the exchange without paying tribute, thou art much mistaken. Nay, then,

* My lady. † Ah me! ‡ Good!

kiss me, sweetheart, and thou shalt have Pepita and Chiquito too, smallest of brunettes, if thou wishest it."

So the brown Doña Dolores very graciously drew the bridle on Pepillo, and, leaning down in her saddle, permitted the Señor Antonio to kiss the ripe-red lips she put out to him. He was longer about this than necessary; and, when at last he unclasped the small brown arms from his neck, he sighed—so sadly, so regretfully, that Pepillo sneezed with a violence that nearly unseated Dolores, and caused Pepita, who had left the sheep, to shy violently to one side. Chiquito, seated upon his haunches a short distance away, eyed the fawn with possible malevolent intentions—it was getting dangerously near the dinner-hour.

"Let us go over to yon tree, doña mia," said Antonio, pointing to a trim live-oak. It was distant a few yards. "The sheep are beginning to shade already, and it is hot in the sun. We can lunch there."

He held up a small wicker basket as he spoke. The doña, pleased by the recent gift of Pepita, was in the best of her many humors. So she smiled sweetly down at Antonio, with a flash of her little white teeth and a revelation of dimples that was bewitching.

"As thou sayest, my Antonio," she replied, turning Pepillo by the bridle.

They were soon there. The small oval shadows of the live-oak leaves were sharply silhouetted on the glaring plain. The sheep and lambs had thrown themselves down beneath the scanty shade. The air resounded with their impatient cries and drowsy bleating.

Nico and Dolores had a pleasant nooning under the sturdy live-oak. Pepillo, meanwhile—his bridle-rein thrown loose upon his neck—was left to wander free and graze. The luncheon that Señor Antonio provided was far superior to the usual repast that cheers the lonely herder. There was white bread of the cook's most triumphant baking; there were long strips of fried bacon, a cold teal, pickles, and a comb of honey. The doña gave her share of this last to Chiquito, who received it between both paws and ate it greedily, smearing his black muzzle and whiskers with the sticky luxury until he looked not unlike some children whose cheeks have participated in an over-generous allowance of bread and molasses. He was so funny that he even infected Nico's gravity—who had been trying to get Pepita to eat a pickle, and only succeeded in offending the sensitive feelings of the antelope. At last, "Granny," the old bell-cow strolled over with her charge—a thick-

jointed lambkin—and ate the crumbs that remained, leaving no trace of the mid-day meal.

Nico leaned back against the live-oak, and, rolling a cigarrito, blew a tiny smoke-ring with a sigh of relief.

"Why is it that you will smoke, little Nico?" said the doña, affectionately. "Thou seest how it stains thy fingers. Of a verity, they are steeped with the poison."

Señor Antonio glanced at the thumb and forefinger which held the cigarrito. On them, Prince Nicotine had set his seal. They were stained with brown to the first joint.

"It is because I enjoy it that I smoke, señorita mia," he replied. "To smoke is to dream. It is to lie in a lap of roses and to set trouble at defiance, while the soft smoke-wreaths lull your senses to reverie and repose."

"Ay de mi! I like not your reflections, Nico," said the doña, wearily.

Her bright eyes followed the flight of a great buzzard, sweeping calmly with motionless wings high above the stifling valley. The prairie-dogs were barking with their shrill clamor. A dry cicala in the curly mesquite grass raised his rasping protest against the heat and the weather generally. The doña began to be sleepy.

Suddenly she sat up and pointed across the valley. Far up on the shoulder of the western "divide," she beheld Pepillo, running wildly and kicking desperately. Something was wrong. She pointed the pony out to Nico.

"A fine caballero* thou, Señor Antonio," she said, reproachfully. "Seest thou Pepillo and his antics yonder? Blessed San Antonio! And why is this? Is it that the Evil One is after him?"

Nico threw away his cigarrito and sat up at once.

"It is the 'heel-fly,'"† he said, after a few moments. Then he laughed. "They have attacked Pepillo. Madre de Dios! Mark you that kick! It would have felled an ox. Bravo! Pepillo—smallest of mustangs!"

He sprang to his feet at once. "I must hasten after Pepillo," he said, "or he will go back to the rancho without me. Stay you here, Dolores, till I return."

He dashed away in hot pursuit, followed by Concho. Pepita looked after her master and then took a few steps forward impulsively. But she thought better of it, came back to the doña, and lay down by her side. Chiquito remained, sucking his paws and licking his chops with grateful memories of the honeycomb.

* Horseman.

† A fly, common in Texas, which stings the feet of cattle.

The doña always believed that after that she must have fallen asleep. She remembered leaning back against the tree, pillowing her head on the soft white side of Pepita, and lying there listlessly to watch Chiquito's droll maneuvers and await Níco's return. The wandering prairie-breeze stirred the tops of the grass with a faint rustle, bringing to her sense fragrant memories of "buffalo clover." Her lashes drooped. Then the earth and the sky and the sunlight swam before her eyes.

Suddenly she sat up with a start. What was that low rumbling sound as of thousands of footsteps, mingled with shouts and cries, coming down the wind? She gazed before her, sweeping the horizon with straining vision. Nothing but the motionless prairie, gleaming under the staring sunlight, met her eyes. A turkey-buzzard, sitting in an adjacent tree, glared down upon her with his gory red crest. Nothing more.

Yet the sounds increased. They were behind her. Dolores shifted her position and glanced back. Santa Maria! She bounded to her feet in a flash. The cause was apparent now.

From side to side of the narrow valley, her eyes rested upon nothing but a dark sea of tossing horns and heaving bodies. A vast herd of wild cattle was coming down upon her at full charge, the shouts of the goading pursuers echoing in their rear. For a second, Dolores gazed as if spell-bound. She was right in the track of the surging host. The thunder of their hoofs shook the plain; the dust, lifted by their plunging feet, rose and hung above the stampeding herd in a murky cloud; the snorting and bellowing of the frightened animals filled all the air with terrible echoes and held her breathless with terror.

One moment only. The next, flinging away her crook, her lunch-basket, even her gaudy sombrero, the doña turned and ran for her life. Her limbs trembled beneath her and the color forsook her brown cheek. Despair was in her heart. She knew it could be but for a few moments only. Nothing short of a miracle could save her from being knocked down and trampled to death by those pursuing feet. And what a death! To be trodden in a few moments out of all form of humanity—swept from the face of the earth, even as the grass that rose so green before the oncoming line, and streamed away in its blighting track—a dull brown thing, stricken of life and form and motion.

Yet, reeling, stumbling, panting—faster, faster—on the doña fled.

Always, as she ran, she fancied she could feel

the hot breath of the fleeing cattle. The dust choked her; the pitiless sand burned her; the agony of that breathless race for life surged in her brain and throbbed in her temples. Faster! faster! while the horizon swam round her, bright lights danced before her eyes, and she grew faint and dizzy. Her feet were cut and bleeding. Twice she fell. Twice she struggled to her feet and stumbled on again. Ah, how she envied Pepita, speeding on ahead, scarcely visible save when the sunlight flashed from her sides like silver!

At last, worn out and gasping for breath, Dolores stopped. She could hold out no longer. She pressed her poor little brown hands over her staring eyes and bowed her head to meet the doom that was close upon her. A little Spanish prayer came into her mind. She repeated it piously.

At that instant, she heard the quick plunging hoof-beats of some animal, running rapidly and apparently counter to the oncoming cattle. She dared not look up. A familiar voice caught her ear, quickened with the terror of the moment and with a sudden gust of air that passed her—she felt herself raised from the earth and swept along with the force of a thunderbolt.

Away, away, borne as on the wings of the wind, she flew. Dropping her hands from her face, the doña found herself seated across the pommel of a saddle, a strong arm around her; and, with a sigh of joy, she fainted upon the breast of Níco.

It was indeed Níco—her own dear beloved Níco—who, mounted on the fleet Pepillo, had plucked her from the very jaws of death, and was even now riding with the furious speed at which he had flown to her rescue. The surging bodies of the cattle parted like brown waves on either side of the intrepid horseman. Hardly had the doña opened her black eyes when the last fleeing steer passed them, followed closely by their pursuing vaqueros.

Níco drew the bridle on the breathless Pepillo and rode slowly back to the live-oak where they had taken their luncheon. The doña gradually recovered strength enough to sit up. Níco's eyes were slowly scanning the surface of the prairie, beaten flat by the countless feet that had swept over it. A thick dust, like the smoke of a battlefield, still lingered in the air. Níco's grave eyes were full of inquiry, but he said nothing. Suddenly, when near the tree, he reined Pepillo up sharply before a dusty brown object that was lying quite still and motionless.

It was the body of poor Chiquito, crushed and lifeless from the merciless feet that had passed over him.

MILLY'S STORY.

BY DAVID N. BROOKS.

It is one of the loveliest June days the earth ever saw. Each separate blade of grass seems to rejoice in the glorious sunlight, and my whole heart is in tune with the day, as I saunter slowly along the village road, with one hand in my pocket, holding tight the dear letter that has made me so happy since the noon mail came in; for John is coming home at last, and we are to be married and live happy ever after, as my old fairy stories used to end, with the bridal of the Prince Charming and his princess. A poor little princess this time, I think, rather ruefully—more like the king who wed a beggar maid, our story is; for dear Daddy was only a farmer on a very small scale, though every inch a gentleman, and, when he died, three years ago, mother and I had a hard struggle for a little while. Of course we took summer boarders, as everyone advised, and of course we lost more than we made; only I shall never regret that hard summer, since it gave me John, and, although our courtship was sealed by the final question being asked when I was picking peas in the vegetable garden, it was none the less sweet and romantic for that. My John is Dr. John Westerly, and he was staying in Donnyrock, making some investigations about the malaria region, for a pamphlet he was writing. He boarded with us; and, brilliant, successful, and rich as he was, he loved poor little me, as I am sure no one was ever loved before. When I think of the lovely accomplished women he must have known, and look at myself critically, I cannot make it true; but it is, it is, and he is coming home from Paris, where he has been studying in the hospitals for a year—is even now on his way. When the happiness of it comes over me, I can scarcely keep from singing along the street, as I return from my walk. How lovely the world is. How good people are, I think, as old Mrs. Mallocks beams and nods to me from her window. As I draw near our gate, I see distastefully that mother has shut all the sun out with closed blinds; well, very soon, I will let a flood of light in, and glorify the rooms.

"Mother," I call out, gayly, running up the steps of the porch, "it's too early for flies. What makes you shut the house up so?"

I rush into the sitting-room and open the blinds. Then, turning around, I see mother,

white and tear-stained and looking half dazed, with a newspaper in her hand.

Mrs. Dawson, from next door, says in a loud whisper:

"Do tell her, for gracious sake, and have it over with," and then, seizing me in her strong arms, seats me gently on the slippery hair-cloth sofa.

Mother bursts out crying, and puts her arms about me and sobs:

"Prepare yourself for the worst, Milly. Oh, Mrs. Dawson, do tell her. I can't!"

I am awe-struck and bewildered, but my one thought is that the bank which holds our few hundred dollars has broken, for we have no near relatives, and I have just heard from John.

"Do tell me what it is," I say, impatiently; and Mrs. Dawson, looking at me pityingly, says:

"Well, if you must hear it, you must," takes the paper from mother's nerveless hand, and reads:

"HORRIBLE DISASTER. The *Travonia*, from Havre, burns at sea. Hundreds of lives lost." Mumble, mumble, then: "Conspicuous among those who helped the women and children into the life-boats was Dr. John Westerly, a well-known young physician, from Paris. When last seen, he was distributing life-preservers to the women who had not been able to get into the life-boat; before another could be manned, the *Travonia* sank, with all on board, except those who had been fortunate enough to crowd into the first two boats. The young physician will doubtless be deeply mourned by the medical fraternity for—"

I think the woman would have read the whole article through; but, glancing at me, she rushed frantically for the camphor and held it to my face.

It was not necessary. I had not fainted. I heard her say distinctly:

"For the Lord's sake, Mis' March, say somethin' to her, for I b'lieve she's a-dyin'."

I saw her go to the mantel, and seize a huge palm-leaf fan, and, returning, wave it back and forth solemnly, and I felt her pat my shoulder, as she said:

"There, there, do cry, can't ye? She'll pull through, Mis' March, if she'll only cry." And I knew that mother was walking the floor distractedly.

I noticed curiously the pattern of Mrs. Dawson's print wrapper. It was purple, with a little white sprig, and one of the big pearl buttons had burst from the capacious bosom, and to this day I hate the color of purple.

I saw all these things in a dim way. Then I felt as if I were someone else, and I mentally looked at myself, leaden and death-like, all the life crushed out of me, lying straight and still in an incongruous blue muslin, with Mrs. Dawson's shawl thrown over me, and I thought:

"Poor girl, how sorry I am. What if it were I, and it were my John who was dead?"

Then I thought, with intense surprise:

"Why, it is I! And John, the John who once held me close and kissed me, warm and alive, is gone somewhere, and I don't know where!"

At this period, Mrs. Dawson shook her head ominously. I think she spoke to me several times, and I did not answer. Why should I?

And she said to poor mother, who was aimlessly walking back and forth:

"Mis' March, I guess I'd call Dr. Kinney, if I was you. It's onnatural fer her to be like this. I don't like it."

Then I looked up at her dully and spoke for the first time. "No," I said, "I don't want him. I want Mr. Easton—maybe he can give me some comfort." And my benumbed mind went wandering on in the dark, searching for something to cling to, until its spell was broken by a hurried coming in, and Mr. Easton, dark and thin, stood looking down at me compassionately. I believe he had a prayer-book in his hand, but he probably saw it was useless to talk to or pray with me as anything but a child. I remember saying to him in an awe-stricken whisper: "I have lost John, and so lost everything!" Mr. Easton was rather unpopular in his congregation. He was unsocial, ascetic, and what is commonly called "stand-off"; but now he knelt by me, and, taking one of my passive hands in his, he first won my attention, and finally, when I vaguely began to believe that John was with God, and that both were definitely somewhere, I fell into a convulsive fit of tears, that probably saved my reason.

He was very good to me that first awful week, and I began to understand that he was unloved because unappreciated. June turned to July, and I began growing a little stronger, but for long months I felt the effects of the shock I had suffered. Mr. Easton's kindness was most unobtrusive. He sometimes would send me books; gradually he fell into the habit of coming over and reading aloud to me, evenings, as I lay on the sofa, for I was not strong enough to sit up

long, and, while I would catch a few words now and then, my mind would be picturing, back of my closed eyelids, that awful shipwreck over and over again. One evening, I saw it all so distinctly that I started and cried: "Oh, stop! I cannot see anything yet but those awful waves. And I can hear nothing but those cries as the ship sank. Oh, do you think I ever can forget?" Mr. Easton had closed his book, and he walked up and down the room slowly and softly. A flush of pain rose suddenly over his dark thin face. He paused near the window, and, pushing aside the curtain, he looked absently out into the warm dark night, and I saw his lips move as if he were repeating something. Then he turned and came hurriedly up to the sofa. He put his hand out, and then suddenly drew it back and stood regarding me gently. "I pray God that you may forget," he said. "I do not know—perhaps, sometime—" He did not finish the sentence, and continued to pace the room. I was so absorbed in my own wretchedness that I did not think or care that I had been rude to him in stopping his reading, which had been so welcome to me many times. Mine was the old wail: "There is no sorrow like to mine under the sun," and in it everything else was merged. Mr. Easton went away soon. He came less often, and did not read again until, one afternoon, I begged his pardon for my discourtesy, and asked him to read once more. It was Dante, this time, that he held in his hand, but he opened it and quoted: "And in the book that day we read no more." He smiled a little bitterly. "Let us talk instead," he said.

I wondered at his caring to talk to me: at his religious kindness, I believed it, in being willing to try and interest the poor pale woman, with all her fresh beauty gone, that my glass showed me, the listless black-robed girl to whom life looked so poor and empty. He staid half the afternoon in our cool little parlor, and, when he went out, I tried to thank him for his kindness and show him that I appreciated his unselfishness; but he checked me summarily, and departed for a toilsome walk in the hot August sun, to visit some sick man several miles along the shore. After he left, I went wearily around the room, tidying the little disarrangement a visitor makes. Mother had gone over to Mrs. Dawson's, and I was alone. I heard a step on the porch, and moved slowly to the door, and in one moment I was clasped in John's arms! For the first—and probably the last—time in my life, I was guilty of fainting; but John merged the lover into the physician, and brought me to my senses very quickly. Why should I try to

describe a scene that was sacred for us both. Let it suffice me to say that heaven seemed for once to be on this earth, that the measure of my former suffering was the measure of my present joy. Half an hour later, I knew all: how John had been picked up, quite unconscious, after floating hours, clinging to a plank and some rigging, by a small brig bound for a little Dutch port; how he had been delirious from fever for weeks; and how he had started for home, even when the Dutch doctor had assured him he was risking his life, and had come to me before anyone knew of his arrival even. He had begged the German doctor to cable to me, and had been assured it was done. Whether he had made some mistake in my address, or what, we never knew; but I had not received the message. That evening, I wrote a note to Mr. Easton, begging him to come over, the next day, and rejoice with us. Mr. Archer's little boy, where he boarded, brought me this reply the next morning:

"MY DEAR MISS MILLCENT:

"I am leaving Donnyrock for some time, perhaps for always; and I start to-day, so I shall not see you before I go. Do not think me cruel if I say it is sometimes easier for me to mourn with those who mourn than to rejoice with those who rejoice; but believe that my prayers are for your happiness always. And, when you think of your own great grief and pray for those who suffer, remember me.

"Always faithfully yours,

"CUTHBERT EASTON."

There came a sudden little stab of pain through my heart as I read this—a sudden access of light on things that had puzzled me, which almost blinded me for a moment. I handed the note to John silently. I had told him of Mr. Easton's kindness. He read it through grimly, and a faint flush tinged his cheek.

"What do you think of it?" I inquired.

"How old is he?" asked John, before he replied.

"I don't know—twentyseven, perhaps."

"Well, then, I think he may get over it," he replied, bitterly; then, with a rush of generous feeling: "God help the poor fellow. I pity him, Milly. It was a sad return you made for his kindness—wasn't it? Don't grieve over it. I know you never intended to make him care for you."

"Oh, John," I sobbed, "I never thought of it till I got this note."

A tear fell on the paper. Was John a little jealous? Perhaps so. For he took the note gently from me and threw it in the fire. Yet I truly think he was sorrier than I.

John and I are married now, and I have never seen Mr. Easton since. I heard, not long ago, that he was devoting himself to mission-work in the city.

I never could have loved him, even if I had not seen my John; but I never, morning or night, fail to pray remorsefully for the man whose happiness I unconsciously wrecked.

GURNEY'S ROSES.

BY MINNA IRVING.

OVERHEAD the skies were dark,
Full of flying flakes the air;
In my garden, one could mark
Only branches, black and bare—
Leafless now, but once inwrought
With the fairest flowers that blow:
Such the night when Gurney brought
Roses to me through the snow.

Winter in the world without
Glazed the lake and rocked the tree,
Piled the drifted snows about
Deeper yet, if that night be;
But within my room he brought
Summer, with its warmth and glow.
Oh, it was a lovely thought—
Bringing roses through the snow!

"Eyes of midnight, curling hair,
Cheek where burns the blood of France,
Spirit quick to do and dare,
Like a knight of old romance."

Gazing on him, this I thought,
While we talked in murmurs low
Of the roses that he brought,
Of the winter and the snow.

Meantime, Cupid—who had kept
Safely hidden all the while
In a rose's heart, and slept
Sweetly many a snowy mile—
Woke, and, slyly smiling, wrought
Mischief with his fatal bow,
From the roses Gurney brought
To me through the falling snow.

When the sweet good-night was said
And 'twas slumber in the land,
In the firelight's glimmer red,
With the roses in my hand,
Long I sat and long I thought,
Till I kissed them in the glow,
Kissed the roses Gurney brought—
Lovely roses!—through the snow.